

is full of satirists, and its quick ^{mercy on} ~~value of~~
 laughter has little ³ ~~rest~~
 affectation; it is full of women, and ~~as the~~
 demands it
 gaiety and grace. The answer to that
 demand is tlib
 characteristic prose of France. Behind the
 salon li
 boudoir; and women—women like the
 Marquise de Ram-
 bouillet, women like Ninon de l'Enclos—
 have moulded
 more than any other the civilisation of this
 country whose
 emblematic figure in its Art and on its
 coinage is always
 so proudly feminine.

Only French prose, indeed, could
 adequately express
 that peculiar charm, which makes other
 races seem thick-
 ankle in comparison. Forgotten here is the
 ponderous
 seriousness of the Saxon, with the world on
 his shoulders
 and his head in the clouds. 'L'honnete
 homme ne se
 pique de rien'—les honnetes gens ne
 boudent pas'—*un
 homme affaire ne peut etre un honnete
 homme'. 'Hon-
 nete'—'honest'—what a gulf, wide as the
 Channel, lies
 between those two words; as, again,
 between jolly' and
 joli! Again, 'to take French leave' is applied
 by us to a
 moral lapse, like stealing a holiday; Yen dler
 & Fanglaise'
 is a lapse of manners, to vanish from a
 party without
 taking leave. Life is in France more an Art;
 and less a
 Mission. And Art in its turn is only a part,
 though an
 essential part, of life; not a rather tearful
 sort of religion.

C'est peu d'etre agr&ble et chaimant dans
 un livre,
 fl faut savoir encore et converser et vivre.

*Le pauvre enfant, il ne sait pas vivre'—such

was the
comment of his Swiss guides on Ruskin; and
Ruskin him-
self never uttered a truer. Byron's
impatience with 'an
author that's all author', with 'these home-
keeping min-
strels', his contemporaries, would only have
deepened, if
he had lived longer in nineteenth-century
England.

But though letters have always remained,
to the typical
French intelligence, only a part of life, they
have played